



United States Army Corps of Engineers
Wilmington District
P.O. Box 1890
Wilmington, North Carolina 28402-1890

News Release

Contact: PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
Phone: (910) 251-4626

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Corps gets ready to respond to Hurricane Debby

WILMINGTON, North Carolina—All of the US Army Corps of Engineers Districts in South Atlantic Division have begun to mobilize in response to threats from Hurricane Debby. The storm's ultimate direction and strength are still unknown at this hour. Meteorological models predict possible paths into the Gulf of Mexico or up the Atlantic Coast. "In either case, we may have missions to provide emergency assistance," said Wilmington District Commander James W. DeLony. "We are ready."

At this time, the District's Emergency Response and Recovery Organization, a 30-person group of District employees who are pledged to support the Corps in area disasters, has been put on alert. Today, a 6-10 person advance party is planning to secure a base of operations, possibly as far distant as Florida, to rapidly lay groundwork for immediate mission capabilities, and prepare the way for remaining ERRO members' arrival.

Wilmington District holds the Corps-wide contract to supply emergency bottled water to disaster-impacted areas. Thus, if water is needed, the District will become involved.

"We sincerely hope to provide back up support, rather than again become the District that receives the impact," COL DeLony said, "but we know that we have to be prepared for any eventuality. and all kinds of movement from the storm." Five Wilmington District flood control projects have full flood storage capacity, said Terry Brown, Water Control Manager for the the US Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District. "Our lakes will all have their full flood storage capacity if we should need it to accommodate heavy rains resulting from Hurricane Debby," Brown said.

Although Debby, the fourth named tropical storm of the 2000 season is not yet slated to be headed into the Carolinas, Wilmington District emergency personnel are alert to the situation, and carefully monitoring the storm's progress through the Caribbean.

"Our flood control facilities include the following: W. Kerr Scott Lake in western North Carolina is about two feet below normal. Philpott Lake in Virginia is about five feet below the normal operating level. Both B. Everett Jordan Lake and Falls Lake in the Research Triangle region of North Carolina are very close to normal levels and have their full flood storage capacity available. John H. Kerr Lake, straddling the North Carolina – Virginia line, is currently about eight tenths of a foot above its normal level but is expected to be near normal by this coming weekend before any rains from the tropical system could arrive. "We are in excellent shape to meet the challenge of a tropical storm now," Brown said. "The lakes are where we need them to be in order to offer both maximum flood storage protection and to meet the water quality and water supply purposes if the storms do not arrive. River systems in the area are NOT in flood. We just want the public to know that we are aware of and constantly monitoring weather systems that may travel northward and affect our area.

The public is invited to visit the Wilmington District web site to monitor the status of all District flood control projects and river basin conditions on the Dan, Roanoke, Yadkin, Neuse, and Cape Fear Rivers. Real-time reservoir, river stage and river flow information is available on the web site and also includes historical data. Go to the web site at <http://epec.saw.usace.army.mil/> or call (910) 251-4626 for further information.